NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN RE:	
THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON OCTOBER 1, 2015	**NTSB Accident No. DCA16MM001**

INTERVIEW OF: EARL LOFTFIELD

Friday,
October 9, 2015

Jacksonville, Florida

BEFORE:

MIKE KUCHARSKI, NTSB
[redacted] [redacted] U.S. Coast Guard
MIKE MILLAR, ABS
KEVIN STITH, TOTE Services
LCDR [redacted] U.S. Coast Guard

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

GIL FELTEL, ESQ., Tanner Bishop

This transcript was produced from audio provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

4:17 p.m.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, good afternoon everyone. Today is the 9th of October. And we're still onboard the El Yunque. And this is part of the investigation of the El Faro loss, or accident, or incident.

My name is Mike Kucharski. I'm with the NTSB. The NTSB essentially is tasked by Congress to determine probable cause in transportation accidents.

We have no enforcement powers. We try to determine the best that we can the probable cause in hopes that there will be recommendations or lessons learned so this tragic accident is not repeated.

We're here in the Captain's office on the El Yunque in Jacksonville. And the El Yunque we understand is a sister vessel of the El Faro. And we'd like to ask the Captain some questions.

Again, my name is Mike Kucharski. I'm the Group Chairman of Operations, which includes stability, cargo operations and other nautical operations essentially.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: And have you sailed as Captain on this class of vessel?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes. Would you identify --

before we actually get into --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Okay. This is Captain Loftfield. I'm asking Captain Kucharski --

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: To confirm that he has sailed as Captain on this class of vessel.

MR. KUCHARSKI: I have, yes.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: And that's working for this company? TOTE Maritime?

MR. KUCHARSKI: I worked out of Motion Trailer Express.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Oh, Motion Trailer Express.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Right.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Running to the Gulf, through the Gulf of Alaska?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Correct.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Thank you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Sure. And now we can go around the room and identify ourselves.

LCDR [redacted] Lieutenant Commander [redacted] from the U.S. Coast Guard.

MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, American Bureau of Shipping.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith with TOTE Services.

MR. [redacted] with the Coast Guard.

MR. FELTEL: Gilbert Feltel with Tanner Bishop law firm. I'm here as the Captain's personal representative.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Personal representative, great. And Captain, would you state your name for the record and then spell it for us?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: My name is Earl Loftfield, Echo-Alpha-Romeo-Lima, Lima-Oscar-Foxtrot-Tango-Foxtrot-India-Echo-Lima-Delta.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Great. And Captain, would you tell us your basic maritime experience and schooling? If you went to a maritime school? And through the present. Just give us a brief overview of that.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I started through the Seafarers International Union Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship in the class of 219 in 1976/1977. It was a three-month class. Sailed on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers for a short time.

When I chose to continue my education, I chose to go to Massachusetts Maritime Academy. I have two brothers that are both in maritime.

My oldest brother, Eric Loftfield is ten

years older then I am. He went through Kings Point. And presently works as a Pilot for TOTEM Motion Trailer Express running up to Alaska.

My other brother, Curtis, was Chief Engineer onboard the ocean ships Paul Buck for the entire life of the vessel, some 25 years.

I went back to school, Mass Maritime, and graduated in the class of '86. And I have 29 years of sailing time. Twenty-nine years in the industry. That's approximately six months sailing each year.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Captain, have you sailed on other RoRo vessels besides this vessel?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I've sailed on the El Yunque, the Northern Lights, the Westward Venture, the Great Land, and then on the Northern Lights rechristened as the El Faro. And then came back to the El Yunque.

I have about 15 or 16 years of sailing time as Captain on those vessels.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Great. Okay. So, you -- suffice it to say you know the vessels fairly well.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, I do.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And how long have you been Master on this particular one? Whether this vessel, then any of the others?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I was initially on this run in 1999 and 2000 as Second Mate. And came back to this run to the SeaStar run initially when they were doing service to Philadelphia. And I believe that was in 2010.

I can check the payroll records if you'd like a more accurate time of stating that.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So when the -- you said you had spent 15 years as Master of the vessel, was any of that 15 years as Second Mate also? Or was that --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No, from 2000 I began to sail as Master on these vessels. But I've also sailed on several myriad homed MSC chartered vessels or just activations, no notice activations and maintenance activations.

So those vessels would include Cape Fear, Cape Mohican, I did extensive work on the training ship for the -- for Mass Maritime. It was I believe first the Velma Lykes then the Cape Bon, then the Enterprise, then the Ted Kennedy.

Took it through a good portion of its yard periods at Bender Shipyard. I also did a four-month trip on the Flickertail State going over to South Korea in 2001.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Back to my original question, were any of the -- besides these vessels, were any of those RoRo vessels?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No, those were not.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So your RoRo experience is on this class of vessel?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: As Captain.

MR. KUCHARSKI: As Captain?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes. I have some RoRo experience as a Third Mate as well.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Thank you. So the El Faro, how much -- did you ever spend any time on that vessel?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes. That's what I said.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. As Second Mate was that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. The actual time on the El Faro?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: When it was the Northern Lights, there was a trip in 2003. And then it was about 2010 that the Great Land laid up.

And they needed to have a relief Captain in lay up in Baltimore for the El Faro. And I spent about

five months on it in lay up there. Then delivered it to Philadelphia.

At which point another Captain came on for a ten-week rotation. And I went back and relieved him and did another ten-week rotation.

So that would have been about May that it started. And my second rotation started somewhere -- I'd have to pull out the dates, but.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Was that at sea?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: It was. So, you had the lay up time as Captain in 2010. And then you had at sea time on her as Northern Lights?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It was the El Faro at that time. It was rechristened the El Faro somewhere around 2006 or 2007 I believe.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So a number of months on there as Master --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Underway.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Both Northern Lights and El Faro.

MR. KUCHARSKI: The handling of the vessel itself, did you notice anything in the way she handled? Was it more tender after they put the container

arrangement onboard?

Was it -- how did it react in a seaway? Did you have it in any substantial seas, say anything over 20 foot?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It was much stiffer after the container conversation had taken placed. They put permanent ballast in double bottoms. It made for a less -- a shorter rolling period, quartering on snap rolls.

The same is true of this vessel now. I -- as Second Mate, I was on this ship with Hurricane Floyd. So I did see some higher waves. And in a light condition, it's incredibly sharp snap rolls.

In our present loaded conditions when we're loaded nearly down to our marks, when we're sailing with a full boat, it is tender. But it is within the Coast Guard and the ABS approved stability books.

There's -- and you got to trust somebody.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So the -- typically on the southbound run from Jacksonville down to San Juan it would be fairly close to your marks?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: For the last two years, yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And why do you differentiate for the last two years?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The Horizon Lines terminated its service completely last year. And in the year prior to that, they were having machinery casualties with their ships that reduced their cargo carriage capacity.

And the SeaStar was picking up the cargo carriage.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And when you say they're tender, it's --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: You said tender.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: What do you mean by tender?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: What do you mean by tender?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Explain when you say there's less margin, okay? Or you're close to your marks. I think you said. We can always play it back if you want to.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The marks are --

MR. KUCHARSKI: What do you mean then that no ship is --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The marks are established by the Classification Society. It was

originally developed -- they're called Plimsoll marks, and it's for insurance purposes to make it so that the vessel is worthy of insuring instead of overloading and sinking.

And this is -- runs back several hundreds of years. So, the marks are the draft marks that are on the vessel forward, aft and midships. And we are not permitted to submerge those marks and sail to sea at that time.

So, close to the marks is close to the safe working limits that have been established by Classification Society and regulatory agencies.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So, let me -- you were saying that the ships were stiff when they were in a lighter condition.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It has a shorter roll period. The physics of a roll period is that a pendulum will go back and forth at about the same rate. That's why a clock is reliable, based on a pendulum.

And so the -- when you shorten that, when the roll period is not as great or as long in time, but is still subjected to the forces that make it run the entire distance, it means that you get to the end and have to turn around and come back that much faster. That's what is referred to as a stiff ship.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And when the ship leaves close to her marks, how would you describe the motion then?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The rolling period, the total number of second is longer. It's more seconds. So it takes longer to get from one side to the other.

And that being the case, there is a much lower incidence of putting stress on the lashes and on the crew.

MR. KUCHARSKI: You mentioned that you were in Hurricane Floyd. How close were you to the center of the hurricane? And were you at -- I assume you were at sea at the time?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Hurricane Floyd approached Puerto Rico just as we were departing. We made an assessment of -- or the Captain at the time made an assessment to route south and west of the Bahamas through a channel known as Old Bahama Channel.

The Hurricane on its approach had been moving back and forth. And that was seen -- in an unpredictable manner. And that was seen as the desirable direction to go.

Hurricane Floyd essentially arrived at Jacksonville at the same time that we were scheduled to arrive. So, we let it come in first.

We were coming up from Old Bahama Channel, which comes up all the way along the south coast of Florida. With Hurricane Floyd being here, the waves and swells were going straight down the straits of Florida from Jacksonville south towards Miami.

And we were facing probably about 35 to 40 foot seas at the time. We were not able to head straight into them because of the motion of the vessel with that much pitching.

And so we were taking them on the quarter. And essentially diagonally back and forth. They're tacking back and forth across the swells.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So how close would you actually say you were to the center of the hurricane? The closest point?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Several hundred miles.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And your position at that time when you were on the vessel?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I was Second Mate.

MR. KUCHARSKI: I see. Follow on questions here?

LCDR [redacted] Yes. Lieutenant Commander [redacted] from the Coast Guard. Just with regard to the 35 to 40 foot seas on the quarter that you mentioned.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's actually on the bow. If I said quarter -- we were hitting them at about 45 degrees off the bow. Technically on the quarter is 45 degrees off the stern.

LCDR [redacted] Thank you. And when you were taking those 35 to 40 foot seas, what kind of water were you seeing on the second deck? And did you have any down flooding through any place?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: We were in a very controlled environment. The swells were large and coming straight down southward. But we did not have a lot of wind impact.

So, my recollection is that we were not seeing windswept foam coming off of the waves, which is indicative of a Beaufort Scale six or greater. That the wind was relatively calm, not calm, but, you know, 20 knots or so.

And I was -- as Second Mate, I was not concerned with going and making an inspection of the cargo. I do not have any awareness of whether water was getting in onto second deck through the side ports.

LCDR [redacted] Thank you.

MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, ABS. Given the heavy sea state that you experienced, was this on the El Faro that you were serving as Second Mate at the

time?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It was on the El Yunque.

MR. MILLAR: On the El Yunque. And was the propeller coming out of the water? Did it change the behavior that -- were they so rough that the propeller was coming out of the water?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I don't have a recollection of that.

MR. MILLAR: Okay. And I assume you were standing watches as Second Mate during that time. And --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, I was.

MR. MILLAR: And this went on for about one day? Two days?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: About one day.

MR. MILLAR: Did you experience any alarms?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No.

MR. MILLAR: And did you -- were there any alarms reported by engineering while you were on watch?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. If you can recall when you were experiencing those conditions on the El Yunque, were there any issues with any of the lashing gear? Or cargo shifting?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Negative.

MR. STITH: Thank you.

MR. [redacted] I don't have any questions about that.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Back to these vessels, either the El Faro or El Yunque, what would you say the maximum beam wind you've been in?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: On the El Faro or El Yunque I would say maybe 45 knots. There's not a single incident that really stands out though.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Same basic container configuration as we are seeing now with deck load?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. As I stated earlier, the total deck load and total load has increased in the past two years to maximum design capacity.

MR. KUCHARSKI: I know you stated that, but then tell me what that means in containers, okay? On the actual main deck. Does that mean it's higher now then it was back then?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's common to have everything double stacked on containers. And there are some triple stackings in full loads.

That's all very much determined by stack weight. And the deck load requirements or allowances.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Irrespective of

weight, how about the heights? Has that changed any?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. Not really. The -- it's always been -- the limits have always been the deck weights. So, with full containers, which is what we're always going south with, there's no sense in taking empty containers down there, the height is fairly well restricted to two or three high because of the deck load considerations.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, now when I look back aft today, I see them six high. Is that something different that we're talking about now when we talk about the main deck?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I would have to take a look at that. They were stacked high this morning. Those were empties that had not been stripped off yet.

But I have not seen six high loaded containers on the ship ever.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So southbound, fore and aft, everything on the main deck is three or below?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Sometimes four.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And when you were in the 45 knot beam wind, what kind of a list did you experience?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No appreciable sense of more then a two or three degree wind-induced list. So in other words, if it was rolling ten degrees, it would

go 13 degrees to one side and seven degrees to the other.

I'll point out that having worked on car carriers, that with car carriers, any wind change will induce a two or three degree list. And it's a rather constant thing at the end of each watch to adjust the ballast to keep the ship upright.

This ship -- my experience with this class of vessel is that it is far more stable then that. Much less wind area, much less sail area as we say.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So the sail area as you say, we're talking about the containers and the side of the ship?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's what sail area would be.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And your experience is that there's a lot less list caused by the sail area and the wind hitting on that beam?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's correct.

LCDR [redacted] Lieutenant Commander [redacted] from the Coast Guard. Sir, I just wanted to ask you if you've ever seen a difference between your cargo max calculated drafts and the drafts that you're actually seeing on the vessel? And if so, what level of discrepancy would you see?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Every time we take departure, we have the cargo max information printed up. And every single time we go ahead and write the actual drafts on there.

We track that very closely. It is generally a slight difference in trim by maybe a total of four inches. And maybe a discrepancy of two inches on total emersion.

Generally the cargo max will say that it thinks we're deeper in the water then we actually observe by reading the marks.

LCDR [redacted] Thank you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski. Just to be clear on that, you said that the cargo max is showing you deeper in the water then you actually are?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's correct. By about two inches.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith from TOTE Services. In you experiences on the El Yunque and the El Faro, have you ever seen or had issues with standing water on the second deck? Or taking seas on the second deck?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Have I seen water on the second deck, or standing water?

MR. STITH: Have --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It doesn't stand.

MR. STITH: Have you had -- exactly. Have you had issues with that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. Any water that comes on is self bailing.

MR. STITH: Okay. So the water drains --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It drains, self draining.

MR. STITH: Drain sufficiently. And just for the record, how is it drained?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There's side port openings that are at deck level. There is also scuppers. Do I need to define scuppers for this group?

MR. KUCHARSKI: I don't think so.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Thank you.

MR. STITH: Do you ever remember taking any seas other then spray or rainwater on the second deck?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: What we would call green water?

MR. STITH: Yes.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have seen evidence of green water on the second deck. I have not been down there on the second deck looking at it when it takes place.

I have walked around on the second deck and

have waves splash on me. It's a somewhat periodic thing and it's -- but, so I have seen water on the second deck.

And I have seen items that were on the second deck, primarily the extension cords for reefers indicate that they have been moved from side to side with the flow of water.

MR. STITH: Okay. In regards to maneuvering in heavy seas, let's say greater then 20 feet, have you ever tried to make an appreciable course change? Say anywhere from 45 to 90 degrees?

And if you have, how is the ship responding? Is it listing to one side? Or rolled excessively?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have altered course to change the angle at which the ship is meeting the seas. And it is effective.

MR. STITH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Shift gears a little bit to weather, weather routing, weather information. Is there a company process to discuss whether to leave port or not if there's weather outside? Is there a company, a safety management system? Any kind of directives on that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There is no process by which the Captain is required to consult with anybody

in the company for permission to leave port.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Is there any discussion that you have had since you've been out here on this particular run with anyone in the office about whether going outside, concerns about it, possibly changing route?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: We sometimes carry cargo that is weather sensitive. And when we are, we will be consulted about the weather to see if it is suitable for that cargo.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So, the weather discussions have centered around the cargo. How about the ship itself and the route of the ship?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Actually none of this class of vessel has extensive service in the Gulf of Alaska. And it is the responsibility of the person on scene to make decisions that are appropriate for the welfare of the vessel.

So, there is not a forum in which someone ashore presumes that their authority is going to make better decisions then the vessel's Captain. Does that answer your question?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Not quite. I'll continue. Does -- is there any of the voyages that you've made on here where you've actually talked to someone shore-side

to explain a route you were going to take or possibilities heading southbound?

Or did ever come across that you were not going to sail because of the weather?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: When a hurricane approaches a port, by order of the Captain of the Port of the Coast Guard, vessels are to get out of the port. So the concept of being told not to sail out of the port is a dead lead.

We may be told to move to safety. When Hurricane Katrina was coming -- not Katrina, Rita, I was in Beaumont. And I was ordered out of the port by MSC even though I hadn't refueled and I didn't have any cargo onboard.

And the Martin Luther King Bridge is very low. We barely got under the bridge with the BHF radio antennas dragging across it. And we got out of port.

So the notion of being told not to leave port is an inflammatory statement or lead that I think that you, Captain Kucharski, should be embarrassed about.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Is there a Captain of the Port order to go ahead and not leave port in this port? Do you know that? Or to Captain of the Port order to leave port? You know, if a hurricane

approaches?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There are hurricane contingencies. The Captain of the Port will have his hurricane contingencies. And we take the recommendations. They are the orders of the Captain of the Port.

And for the specifics of that, I would encourage you to ask the Captain of the Port.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So you're not aware of -- the short answer is you're not aware of any?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Well, there was not an order of the Captain of the Port to get out of port on the sailing time of the El Faro. Is that --

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Hit it okay?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. That hurricane wasn't approaching Jacksonville.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So, back to the rest of the question. So, is there any process whereby you would call anybody ashore? Have a discussion with anybody ashore in any kind of a weather situation besides the cargo itself?

There wasn't any type of -- with anybody in operations? Or any at VP level or anything like that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. I notified the office of my sailing plan at the time that I'm sailing. If I am making a deviation from the standard, it's almost due southeast and due northwest going back and forth between Jacksonville and Puerto Rico.

If I'm going to make a different route, I notify the office at the time that I've decided to do it. They do not second guess me. They do not tell me that I should or I should not.

There is absolutely no -- I have never received anything along the lines of that's going to take extra miles or extra time or extra money or extra fuel. I have never been doubted on anything like that.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So, you would basically say it's the Captain's decision then to leave port. Nobody at the company is going to say anything. It's the Captain's decision to leave port and to go ahead and route it the way he sees fit?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The thing that would interfere with leaving port is if the weather conditions were difficult enough in port so that the pilots were not willing to take the trans -- to transit the vessel.

Generally, when there's the risk of an approaching storm and the weather could possibly get

worse and worse and worse, the Coast Guard will order the evacuation prior to the approach of a storm.

So, those circumstances in which I would be impeded in leaving at a given moment, is because there is a small storm, unfavorable conditions blowing through, not a major hurricane. And the pilots and the tug boat operators say, it's not a -- we're not going to take you out right now.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So you would say in your opinion, if a storm were approaching, you would rather be out -- head out to sea then stay in port?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: What system do you use or how do you gather weather information?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The primary data source for weather is National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. We can get their weather maps.

But there are many software applications that use that data and make their own projections. Utilize that data and that data's projections and have an easy to use graphic interface.

The one that we use on here is called the Bon Voyage System, BVS.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Is that the same system while you were on El Faro that they used on there?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes. It's purchased by the company.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And can you tell us what type of information comes from the Bon Voyage System?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: You select the information data that you chose to have. The different profiles. It is sent out on a six-hour basis.

It is transmitted via satellite. So, you can specify the entire planet and all the data they possibly have, which is a larger data package. Or, dial it in for the relevant areas and the most relevant weather phenomena that will give you information to make your plans by.

So, that's what I do. For me to make my plans on.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And does this Bon Voyage System, does it provide any voyage or weather routing, or voyage avoid this type of information depending on the weather? Does it provide that to you?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It can be accessed to make recommendations. I prefer to look at the data and make my own assessments and my own evaluations.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So the system that's loaded on here in what --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have never utilized it to make suggestions to me.

MR. KUCHARSKI: But it has that capability?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have not looked for it. I have not Investigated. I don't care about that capability.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So you gather it. It gives you six hourly weather. Can you tell us what type of weather it gives you? What weather information?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The functions that I use are wind speed and direction, wave height, and swell height and direction.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And do you also see the prediction of where the storm is going to hit?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And how long is the run from arrival -- or departure to arrival on this run?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The direct route is 1,090 miles.

MR. KUCHARSKI: How much time on an average southbound trip does that take?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's about 55 hours.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And is that a -- close to full speed run? Or is that a --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, it is.

MR. KUCHARSKI: What's the full speed of the ship?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Under varying conditions, I've seen these ships, this class of vessel doing 23 knots. When we're carrying a tremendous number of reefers, that utilizes an awful lot of the live steam to run the turbo generators. So there's less live steam going to the propeller shaft.

So, if we can make 20 knots or 21 knots, we're doing well. If the weather conditions are unfavorable, the speed comes down a lot more then that.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Are there bilge keels on the hull of this ship?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There is very little in the way of bilge keels. There is a -- approximately oh, maybe 250 feet long on the turn of the bilge, not much more then 12 inches I think. And that's on the mid-body.

MR. KUCHARSKI: On the mid-body. Do you recognize -- do you remember if there were bilge keels on El Faro?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I would expect there to be. But I'm not sure that I ever took that through a dry docking period.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So the -- to close on the

weather routing and the weather, you consult the Bon Voyage System. You look at it, make the decision on where you're going to head the vessel.

You have basically no discussion with the company as far as any kind of decision to route the vessel. You choose it. Let them pretty much know.

If you're weather routing, if you're going around bad weather -- have you been in any bad weather on this vessel on this run southbound?

(Telephone interruption).

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Pardon me, that's a crew member that's looking for a payoff.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Captain, would you like us to stop this so you can pay him off? If it's a --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, there's a --

MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you prefer doing that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: We can stop for a --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Okay.

MR. KUCHARSKI: For a few minutes.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That would be good. It's probably going to be about 20 minutes. There's four of them.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Is that okay with your scheduling as far as stopping and then continuing?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's okay with my scheduling. The Sailing Board has been postponed until at least midnight.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. I don't want to --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: So I have time.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, you have time to get rest and everything?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Got time to get rest. Got time to do payoffs. Got time to complete the electronic notice of arrival.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. It's 1700. We'll stop the interview.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 1700 hours at 1749 hours.)

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Good evening again everyone. It's now about 1749. We're continuing the interview of Captain Loftfield. And today is the 9th of October. And as I mentioned, it's about 1750 now.

So Captain Loftfield, to continue, I think the line of questionings -- questioning, I think the last I had left off with, I asked you about would you -- your preference be something on the lines of leaving port if bad weather were approaching or staying in the port?

And your preference would be to put to sea?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Absolutely.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And could you briefly just say why that would be?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: With most storm systems, they travel at a speed slower then the ship travels. And essentially, you can run away from a storm.

If a storm wants to be in a port, the best thing is to not be where the storm wants to be.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And when you say it can go faster then the storm, this particular class of ship, are you differentiating because of your speed? Or --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Most ships -- most storms, hurricanes, tropical storms, are the most highly tracked storms that there are. And they generally move between six and -- or maybe 15 knots.

And as with any traffic situation, this is just a bigger piece of traffic. And you can maneuver a vessel so that you are not on a collision course with a vessel, with another vessel.

You can almost always get away unless it keeps on chasing you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Have you looked at the track of the Joaquin -- the -- when it went tropical storm, then hurricane?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you have gone towards as the west as the El Faro essentially sent further west then a normal track?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: In the models that I had seen, it looked like west would be a safe place. Furthermore, west is through several of the openings in the Bahamas, which would have dampened the amount of swell that was getting through there.

Even if the winds had continued that strong, it would have been a breakwater that would have reduced some of the seas.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And what happens when you pass a breakwater or an island or something like that when you have a lea or a shelter from the wind, and all of a sudden you come out away from that? Is there anything that you've experienced?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Well, the breakwater does not really offer shelter from the wind. The wind -- unless it's a very tall breakwater. A breakwater disrupts the harmonic motion of a swell or seas that are traveling through water and stops that from happening.

So, in the absence of a sea condition, even if there's a strong wind, the wind would maybe lean the

vessel over. But the wind itself is not going to make the vessel roll back and forth.

The effect of the breakwater is it will reduce the sea. And it will reduce rolling motion of a vessel.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So if you're in -- being protected by this breakwater from sea induced rolling motion and then all of a sudden you come past that, what's been your experience to now all of a sudden you're getting the force of the wave?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The vessel starts to roll.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Have you found any accentuating type phenomena when you pass a particular point of land? Any funneling or anything like that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There's a passage through the Bahamas called Providence Channel. And there have been times coming northbound when the vessel has been subjected to rolling from a storm that was far off.

So, there was only a swell roll, not a sea induced wave state in that place. And upon entering in through what is essentially a breakwater at Northwest Passage, -- not Northwest Passage, at Hole in the Wall, the east end of the entry, the vessel stops rolling.

And then, after we've gone all the way through the Bahamas and are some 14 hours later and are clear of that shelter, we will experience rolling again as soon as we are in the path of the swell.

But it tends to be greatly reduced because we're so much further north and further west, which is away from where the swells were generated.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, just to be clear, you said sea induced swell. Did you mean wind induced swell?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes. Wind induced swell. Thank you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. No, thank you. So, you looked at the track, you think that heading further towards the west would have been a prudent maneuver with a storm out there.

Would you have considered running before it as opposed to -- and let me say, running before is with having the wind and seas bath to beam. Would you have considered doing that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: My recollection of looking at the track is that most of the time he did have the wind and the seas coming from aft of the beam, about the beam. Which would be a favorable condition for getting past the entire storm.

And when it became -- or as it became apparent, if it became apparent that he was not going to get past it, then trying to get behind the only shelter available would be a prudent decision.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Any -- sure.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. I've got a couple of questions here. In regards to the track of the hurricane, you've seen the history and where the hurricane went.

So, your determination to go to west or through the Florida Straits, on the other side of the Bahamas is based on that his -- or that track that you've seen?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: If that was the question that Captain Kucharski was asking, I was not aware of it.

MR. STITH: No, that's my question.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Okay. Can you repeat the question?

MR. STITH: So, basically --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: What I was responding to is in the presence of it, I would have done my best to duck through an opening in the Bahamas.

MR. STITH: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I was not considering at

all the prospect of having chosen to, oh, here's a storm out there. I'm going to route myself 500 miles away from it.

MR. STITH: Okay. So it -- and my question is, you're basing that on knowing the full track of the hurricane now? That's what you would have done in hindsight?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Oh, it's -- well, yes if I --

MR. STITH: Okay, so --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Knew that that was going to happen there, I wouldn't have gone there.

MR. STITH: Exactly. So, are you aware of the weather routing information where the weather data that the El Faro was looking at, have you seen any of that from the last days of September through the first days of October?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have not called up the weather package that arrived in the BVS system for the five days before they sailed. I have not reviewed that data.

MR. STITH: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have reviewed the data that was available as history. Not the data that was available as a projection.

MR. STITH: Okay. So, that answers my question on that regard. My other question is in regards to the Bon Voyage System weather data, in your time here, do you find it a reliable source of information?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, I do.

MR. STITH: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I do utilize it for planning. I do witness it as being a very good indication of the conditions that I'm going to experience.

And I have actually personally made the decision to no longer download the raw data charts from NOA because the Bon Voyage System has such a simple and clear graphic presentation. And interfaces so well with travel planning.

MR. STITH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. [redacted] Captain, this is [redacted] with the Coast Guard. With the Bon Voyage System, you talked about the prediction of the storm that it gives you.

Does it give you that in graphical representation? Or is it text as far as it's moving in a certain direction at a certain speed?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's in living color.

MR. [redacted] Yes.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's an entire chart. My preferred analysis of it is with the wave heights, which you want to stay towards the blue stuff, avoid the yellow stuff. And the orange stuff is really bad.

And the red stuff you just want to look at it and say oh, that must be nasty out there. Glad I'm not there. So, it's very, very graphic, and generally very easy to interpret.

MR. [redacted] Thank you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Questions on the weather?

(No response)

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Let's move up to water tight door policy. Is there any water tight door policy that the company has?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The company policy is to obey the law. And Coast Guard policy is that water tight doors must be closed and secured at sea.

Any opening of the water tight door while at sea needs to be logged. The time that it opened and the time that it closed.

And there is a policy of completing the log books, a log book entry upon departure, that all water tight doors have been checked and secured. And in addition to reviewing all ship stability and noting

that it's safe for the intended voyage.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And when I say water tight doors, to -- besides the cargo doors, the large cargo doors that the trailers go through, the scuttles and --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: All water tight openings as inspected and certified by both Coast Guard and ABS, are in that category.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It's very clear, there's no question about what are water tight doors.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So when the ship is at sea, do they go down in the cargo holds to check the cargo?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: If conditions permit. Clearly if the conditions are that there is heavy seas going across that weather deck, they would not be going down in there.

But, yes, during regular inspections of the cargo and equipment, those are accessed.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So the scuttles or some kind of door is opened to go inside of that --

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The scuttles.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And are those logged, routinely logged when they're opened and closed?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Scuttles are not routinely logged. It's cargo water tight doors that's specified in the official log.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And are the large water tight doors ever opened at sea?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Not without logging.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So, have you had to -- have they been logged that they've been opened and closed?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Follow on questions?

MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, ABS. Captain, for the big water tight doors, what would be an example of why a door would need to be opened at sea?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: We would actually open a door at sea if we were doing repairs on the plates that go across so that vehicles can drive back and forth.

MR. MILLAR: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That would be a repair that we would do at sea so that it's not interfering with other operations. There have been instances where equipment would get stagged out of the engine room, which comes up the water tight door by -- the number two water tight door, where we would want to be able to utilize a forklift to move something back and forth in

anticipation of port or operation support.

MR. MILLAR: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: And it would not be done in adverse conditions.

MR. MILLAR: And as part of that program, you would do like a risk analysis? Or is that something out of the ordinary that you would do like a safety analysis?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That is out of the ordinary. And there would be a job hazard analysis is the company form for doing that.

MR. MILLAR: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: They have job hazard analysis, hot work permits and confined space permits that are all part of our safety program that is managed through the office. And very specifically directed.

MR. STITH: Another question. Kevin Stith with TOTE Services. The Master of the El Faro stated in his voice message to the company, or his conversation with the DPA that day, one of the manholes, one of the scuttles on second deck popped open.

In your determination, your interpretation of that statement, could you envision or reason that a -- one of those scuttles would pop open?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I do not have awareness of how that could happen. It would simply be speculation --

MR. STITH: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: To say that a category four hurricane and the dynamics at play there could have something that was not prepared for.

MR. STITH: Okay.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: That's a -- I will say that the person who was Chief Mate on there, I've sailed with a lot. And I have a tremendous amount of respect and confidence for his abilities.

And that he's also been on the run going through the Gulf of Alaska. And is very, very well aware of what's necessary in the way of securing and what looks secure.

And knowing that they were going into inclement weather, I have every confidence that he would have had things as secured as could be. But a category four brings other things into it. Other dynamics.

MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, ABS. In securing certain closures, particularly in the way of number two deck, or the bulkhead deck, is there any consideration for closing the dampers on the ventilation trunks?

That you know, the exhaust ventilation trunks? The screen -- there appear to be screened-in openings. And then there was another closure door inside of that.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have not considered the use of five dampers or fire closures as a part of securing for a water tight condition. And I don't know of that being written as a -- as a strategy for water tight integrity.

MR. MILLAR: Okay. I have another question, Captain, this is Mike with ABS. Have you ever experienced or had an indication of the bilge alarm in the number three hold or cargo holds while at sea?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No. Not other then testing them.

MR. MILLAR: Thank you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski again. In an emergency situation, a distress situation or emergency situation, what do you have at your disposal?

What on the -- as far as notification, communications type equipment? And what would you use in priority? As a priority, you know, if you had to send out a distress or an alerting message?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There's the GMDSS,

that's the Global Maritime Distress Signaling system, which has redundancy in terms of in Morse at sea, it is the primary long range. It also has narrow band direct printing for high frequency and mid frequency radio transmission.

Those are not used as much. They require too many in identifying a station to have any kind of communication.

The vessel is also equipped with satellite telephone. And with the GMDSS and Morse at sea, you can specify through text whatever information you wish to communicate.

A telephone call is probably the first thing that would be done. So that you'd be able to communicate clearly what was being observed and what the assessment of things were.

After that, the -- after you have a telephone call, the initiation of emergency devices is useful in that it notifies Coast Guard and all of the watchers of the emergency signals. But really, you've already communicated what you need to communicate.

The parts of the GMDSS system include the EPERB. The Electronic Position Indicating Radio Beacon and the Emergency Position. That's actually outside of the bridge posted in a -- mounted in a way that you're

cloak free of the vessel.

Those are the methods of communicating.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. You mentioned a phone call. What -- or voice.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Voice.

MR. KUCHARSKI: So, what would be the primary mode of a voice phone call or a voice communication?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: You mean what equipment do we have to do that?

MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes, what you use? Yes, as far as that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: This vessel has two. They're both INMARSAT. INMARSAT is based on geostationary satellites orbiting around the equator.

It's a system that's been in place for probably 40 years now. Although the -- I'm sure the satellites have been changed. And certainly the -- what happens with carrying a signal has improved, just with analog TV versus digital TV.

And we have -- the latest generation is the Fleet Broadband, which is very reliable. Both vessels have the IG50. They have -- that's the smallest model.

And the -- it is routed through a telephone system. A regular network system throughout the vessel

so that a call can be made either from the bridge -- on this vessel, the bridge, the Chief Engineer's office or the Captain's office.

MR. KUCHARSKI: And you said INMARSAT. So there's INMARSAT-C. What is this -- is it -- besides INMARSAT, does it have an Alpha, Bravo or something like that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: INMARSAT is the system that maintains the geostationary satellites. They have -- for the fleet broadband, I don't even know if they've given it a letter designation.

INMARSAT-A was the first one. Huge analog. INMARSAT-B was when they first went to digital.

INMARSAT-C was very small. Capable only of texting. And has been type approved for use in the Global Maritime Distress Signaling systems. And continues to be a workforce there.

There was the M and the mini M, which I think came out about 15 or 20 years ago that was initially for yachts. Then there was the -- I think there was the F that I have on the Westward Venture after the A got decommissioned.

And the present generation is what they're calling fleet broadband. And that's what was installed on this vessel and the El Faro.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you consider using the SSAS?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: If -- the SSAS is specifically designed to notify of an intruder. And the beauty of the SSAS and its design is that the button can be pushed, initiated, and nobody can tell that the button has been pushed.

And there's no indication on the vessel that it's been pushed. There's no alarm. There's no buttons to press.

If I had apprehension that somebody might not have heard either the GMDSS or the EPERB, it would make sense to push the SSAS to really kind of verify that.

If I had already had voice communications and described everything that was going on, I don't know what would be gained by it other then to simply say I'm pushing everything I can.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Do you know what kind of in -- what information the SSAS system puts out?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I believe it puts out the basic GPS data of the vessel which is position, and course and speed. On our SSAS, it can also include writing a message that goes in with it.

But it's a very basic text message.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Let me zero in on something. You said course and speed? Is that what you -- are we fairly sure on that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I'm not absolutely certain that it has course and speed. I have seen the test messages. We do test messages on the SSAS on a quarterly basis.

And I believe it indicates -- I know on some SSASs, it used to indicate, there's two buttons in remote locations onboard the vessel, and it indicates which one of them was depressed.

MR. STITH: That was my question and he answered it.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Maybe before we leave, one of the last things we can do, can we make some copies of the SA -- you said it's identical that's -- the one on here that's on the El Yunque was on the El Faro?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: At the time that I was on the El Faro, I think that it had one of the -- they were transitioning from one to the other. Originally SSASs were stand-alone equipment when the requirement first came into place.

And since that time, Furuno with their newer generation of the INMARSAT-C entered in software into

it so that with the existence of a stand alone button, it would route through there, and the SSAS system would go through there.

The present SSAS system through the FELCOM15, Furuno sends out an email versus the original SSAS systems were monitored by Coast Guard. And the simple act of testing it required notifying the Coast Guard that you were going to test it before you did it.

The FELCOM15 can be tested to verify email connectivity without any involvement or time and attention requirement from the Coast Guard.

MR. STITH: This is Kevin Stith with TOTE Services. The information regarding the SSAS, it's operation, and the test message procedures, where is all that information kept?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The vessel Security Officer is responsible for tracking that information.

MR. STITH: And is the vessel security plan maintained in electronic format only?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: At this time it is, yes.

MR. STITH: Are we allowed -- are we permitted without the CSO's permission to print anything out about the SSAS from the VSP?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: No, we're not.

MR. STITH: Okay. Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. I've asked this CSO for permission to get that information.

MR. KUCHARSKI: It would be just basically to find out --

MR. STITH: Right.

MR. KUCHARSKI: What about the information that we're seeing, that we know it's critical. Any other line of questions along the communications sweep?

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. Have you ever had, I don't want to say opportunity, or an occasion to either test or actually send a distress message from this at sea, the MFHF or the VHS?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I have not.

MR. STITH: In your experience on here, are those pieces of equipment tested on a regular basis by the ship's crew?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The equipment is tested on a regular basis by the ship's crew. The distress systems on them are not tested.

I mean, we do not -- we do not call out a fire when there is not a fire.

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Service. Also, are any other services performed, like an annual service on the GMDSS equipment and certified by

anybody?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: The regulatory agencies make us do it. ABS. They're in charge of overseeing all of that. And there are licensed vendors working on behalf of the ABS through ABS certification processes to make sure that they're approved vendors.

And all of the equipment gets licensed and inspected on an annual basis. And there's also a requirement for having a shore-based maintenance requirement done on all of those items.

MR. STITH: Very good. On the El Yunque, have you ever had any problems with any of the GMDSS equipment not passing inspection? Or any function of it?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: It always passes inspection.

MR. STITH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Let's go back to the El Faro. This is Mike Kucharski. The VDR on there, were there microphones associated with that?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: I believe so. Each VDR I've seen installed on this class of vessel has microphones installed on them. Westward Venture, Great Land, El Faro, and this on, the El Yunque, I've been on all of them since VDRs were required. And there were

microphones.

I cannot specifically say that I remember where the microphones were on the El Faro. But, I feel confident that I would have noticed it conspicuous if they would have been absent.

MR. KUCHARSKI: While you were Master on the El Faro, did you have any engine or propulsion losses? And let me qualify that. So when I say engine, you know I mean boilers, losses of the plant or propulsion.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Not to the best of my recollection.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Were you aware of any of the other vessels having any problems with propulsion or boiler problems?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: These vessels are almost 40 years old. There have been maintenance, routine maintenance required. What could pass as a boiler problem is occasionally a boiler tube will leak.

After 40 years, there's a very clear idea of how to respond to that. And how to not have it be a major casualty.

And in order for the vessels to perform as well as they do, during the regular shipyard periods, these things are surveyed and work is one in advance of having things go wrong out at sea. It's quite

impressive to me, how well they work.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Gents, I'll open it up. Any specific questions that you have?

MR. STITH: Kevin Stith, TOTE Services. In your time with TOTE Services, do you feel their risk management process was adequate?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Yes, I do.

MR. STITH: Thank you.

MR. KUCHARSKI: How about your thoughts -- this is Mike Kucharski again. How about you thoughts on safety culture overall with TOTE?

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: Over the years the loss of time incident reports and the safety total evaluations have been annually published by Harry Rogers, who is no longer with this company. There's a record of being better at safety then the rest of the industry.

And my sense is that we have all worked very hard to achieve that. And that the amount of pushing for a safety culture that came out of Harry Rogers, though often unwelcomed, generated demonstrable results. Unarguable.

MR. KUCHARSKI: Any follow up gents?

(No response)

MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Thank you. It's

1826. The interview is ended. Thank you very much for your time. Sorry to intrude.

And I image it's very difficult knowing the people over there. So, thank you.

CAPTAIN LOFTFIELD: There were some -- I sailed with quite a few of them.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 1826 hours).

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident
Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of Earl Loftfield
Jacksonville, Florida

DATE: 10-09-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 68 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

[redacted]

NTSB RESPONSE (in bold blue) TO TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO
TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR

EARL LOFTFIELD

TAKEN ON

OCTOBER 9 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LI IE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEED. _____
Initials

Earl Loftfield
Printed Name of Person providing the above information

[redacted]
Signature [redacted] bove information

10/8/2015
Date

NTSB RESPONSE (in **bold blue**) TO TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO
TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR EARL LOFTFIELD
TAKEN ON
OCTOBER 9, 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	**SUGGESTED** CORRECTED WORDING	**NTSB RESPONSE**
3	10	Motion	Totem Ocean	**AGREE**
3	12	Motion	!Totem Ocean	**AGREE**
5	2	Motion	Ocean	**AGREE**
6	14	Myriad Homed	MARAD owned	**AGREE**
9	6	Conversation	Conversion	**AGREE**
9	8	Quartering	Bordering	**AGREE**
12	8	Lashes	Cargo lashing	**Do not agree. Sounds like "lashings"**
18	9	Then	Than	**AGREE**
19	8	Emersion	Immersion	**AGREE**
22	14	None	Some	**Do not agree. Sounds like "Actually no, this class …"**
22	15	Has	Have	**Do not agree. Transcript is correct**
23	16	BHF	VHF	**AGREE**
29	11	Then	Than	**AGREE**
33	3	Sent	Went	**AGREE**
33	15	Lea	Lee	**AGREE**
35	19	Bath	Aft	**AGREE**
35	24	About	Abaft	**AGREE**
44	6	Five	Fire	**AGREE**
45	2	In Morse at sea	INMARSAT-C	**AGREE**
45	6-8	Entire paragraph	No guess at what was intended	**Do not agree. Transcript is correct**
45	10	And Morse at sea	INMARSAT-C	**AGREE**
45	23	EPERB	EPIRB	**AGREE**
46	1	Cloak	Float	**AGREE**
46	23	IGSO	1-250	**AGREE**
47	17	Workforce	Work horse	**Do not agree. Transcript is correct**
48	12	EPERB	EPIRB	**AGREE**
53	24	One	Done	**AGREE**